

JULY 16 1961

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Fred Shaw Books



Never Publish A Failure!

Quietly, unobtrusively, Wake-Brook House, one of the most interesting of America's small publishing firms, has all but moved to Miami. Director Edwin Geauque (pronounced Jay-oak) and his talented wife were just seeking a vacation when



HELENE GEAUQUE

they first followed the sun to South Florida; but when their infatuation with the sand and the sea began to deepen into a real love affair, they decided to bring their business with them.

The result was that the Miami stops became longer and busier and that more and more equipment began to move south from Sanbornville, N. H. Last year the Geauques survived their first Miami summer. And a few weeks ago they brought out their first book that can be considered "a Miami product in its entirety." The book is Larry Thompson's "Life with Caesar" (\$3); the superb illustrations are the work of a Miami artist, June Amoroso.

The Wake-Brook imprint dates from 1946, when Ed Geauque left intelligence work for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, determined that he would now live as he pleased. Every year he and his wife Helene publish from five to seven new books, specializing in poetry, art, and prose that falls into non-commercial patterns.

Yet Wake-Brook is strictly a commercial house. Mr. Geauque sees nothing wrong with a writer paying for the publication of his own work, any more than I do; but the stench rising from the vanity presses is so noxious that he has a fixed rule that no Wake-Brook writer can contribute to publishing costs.

How can this infant press survive in the battle with the mastodons of publishing? The formula goes something like this: Hold down overhead, don't neglect any of the usual methods of promotion, but don't depend on them too much either. The sales technique that works for Wake-Brook owes something to old-time subscription publishing and to modern book clubs.

When the Geauques find what they consider a worthy manuscript, they send an informal review to a carefully selected mailing list. Unless the response indicates that the book will be successful, they reluctantly give up their plan — unless, as they say, they can find publishing money elsewhere. So it is that although Wake-Brook can't boast of its best sellers, it never publishes a failure.

I've been disappointed with the literary quality of some of the W-B books I've seen, but no one could quarrel with the skill and taste of the people who made them. Helene Geauque is a wonderfully talented book designer; and in these days of cheap paper, undersized type, and flimsy bindings, the hand-made products of Wake-Brook House look like collectors' items.

If you'd like to get reports on new Wake-Brook plans, send your address to P.O. Box 1286, Coral Gables 34. But don't flood the Geauques with manuscripts that have been shuttling back and forth to publishers since 1913. It wouldn't be neighborly.

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